

Frigitia #4

25X1

Secret

NSA review completed



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

*Recent Communist Logistical and Manpower
Developments in Indochina*

Secret

ER IM 73-19-3
February 1973

25X1

39

Copy No.

Page Denied

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
27 February 1973

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

RECENT COMMUNIST LOGISTICAL AND MANPOWER
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA

SUMMARY

1. Communist logistical activity throughout Indochina was sustained at a high pace during the week, and there were further indications of significant personnel infiltration since the cease-fire.

2. In the southern North Vietnamese/Laotian Panhandle area the dry season military resupply effort is apparently near its peak. Very heavy supply deliveries are still moving through southern North Vietnam and entering Laos, primarily via the Ban Karai Pass and on routes west of the DMZ. The high level of activity is also proceeding in eastern Cambodia. Inside South Vietnam, Communist vehicle movements continue high in the northern regions of the country, while farther south, Communist plans to move large quantities of "war materials" from Cambodian base areas into the Delta have been noted.

3. The North Vietnamese have maintained a high rate of infiltration in the period immediately preceding and following the cease-fire in South Vietnam. Last week, 16 new regular infiltration groups -- some of which must have departed from Vinh after 27 January -- were detected in the pipeline, most destined for COSVN. Communist military recruitment has also resumed in at least one area of South Vietnam.

4. The buildup of antiaircraft artillery and SAM units around Khe Sanh has continued with the deployment of a North Vietnamese radar company from Laos into South Vietnam -- the first such enemy deployment noted since the cease-fire. Farther south, another COSVN element has moved into South Vietnamese Military Region (MR) 3, and in MR 4 repositioning of VC/NVA forces suggests continued sharp fighting along "Sampan Alley" in the northern Delta. In Laos and Cambodia, no major redeployments of combat forces were detected.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Economic Research. Comments and questions are welcome. They may be directed to

25X1

25X1

DISCUSSION

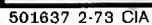
Recent Communist Logistical Developments in Indochina

Logistic Activity in Southern North Vietnam

5. High levels of transportation activity have continued throughout the southern Panhandle of North Vietnam as supplies moved both west toward northern Laos and south toward southern Laos and South Vietnam during the week. On 20 February, for example, an element of Binh Tram 18 in the Vinh area reported unloading some 200 tons of cargo for further transshipment. The same day an element of the Binh Tram reported that 82-mm mortar ammunition had been sent to northern Laos. By 22 February, the crash transportation program to move supplies to northern Laos was scheduled to windup. More than 2,000 tons of cargo were detected being moved there during the first three weeks of the month, but it is not yet clear whether the North Vietnamese actually achieved their goal of moving 6,600 tons there during the 1-22 February period. In this connection, on 22 February a transportation element operating in the Binh Tram 18 area was ordered to dispatch 35 of its vehicles to Hanoi for an undisclosed purpose while the remainder of the element continued to move cargo to northern Laos. The directive could reflect the reassignment of the vehicles after having completed their mission, or could simply reflect their going to pick up cargo to supplement cargo movements south by rail.

6. Although no cargo specifically earmarked for South Vietnam was noted in COMINT moving through Binh Tram 18 this week, continuing reflections of activity farther south indicate that such movement is continuing. For example, on 20 February an element of Binh Tram 18 referenced the continued movement of vehicles across the ferry at Ben Thuy, just south of Vinh. Also, on 23 February an element of Group 571 (Quang Binh Province) reported that almost 1,600 tons of cargo had been handled -- probably moved south -- since 11 February, an average of more than 130 tons daily. Nearly 500 tons of the cargo was specified to have been ordnance and the remainder rice. Cargo remaining on hand to be delivered included 300 tons of rice and 280 tons of ordnance. Earlier intercepts had reflected continuing activity around Dong Hoi: a recently available intercept of 16 February revealed that vehicles were moving more than 120 tons of cargo (some, if not most, of which were weapons) south of Dong Hoi; and on 22 February an NVA element noted that it was sending 35 vehicles to Dong Hoi carrying ammunition.

7. North Vietnamese civil communications have also revealed some southbound movements of supplies. The Department of Information and Culture in Quang Binh Province was recently informed by Hanoi that



unspecified supplies for Quang Tri had been prepared and would be sent. Earlier the Ministry of Public Health had discussed the delivery of medical supplies to Quang Tri for the repatriation of prisoners of war.

8. Finally, intercepted communications from the Naval Coastal Surveillance Stations in southern North Vietnam continue to reflect "supply vessels" operating in the southern Panhandle area. Additional unidentified vessels have been detected operating from Quang Khe south to within four miles of the DMZ possibly carrying out resupply missions.

Logistic Activity in Southern Laos and Cambodia

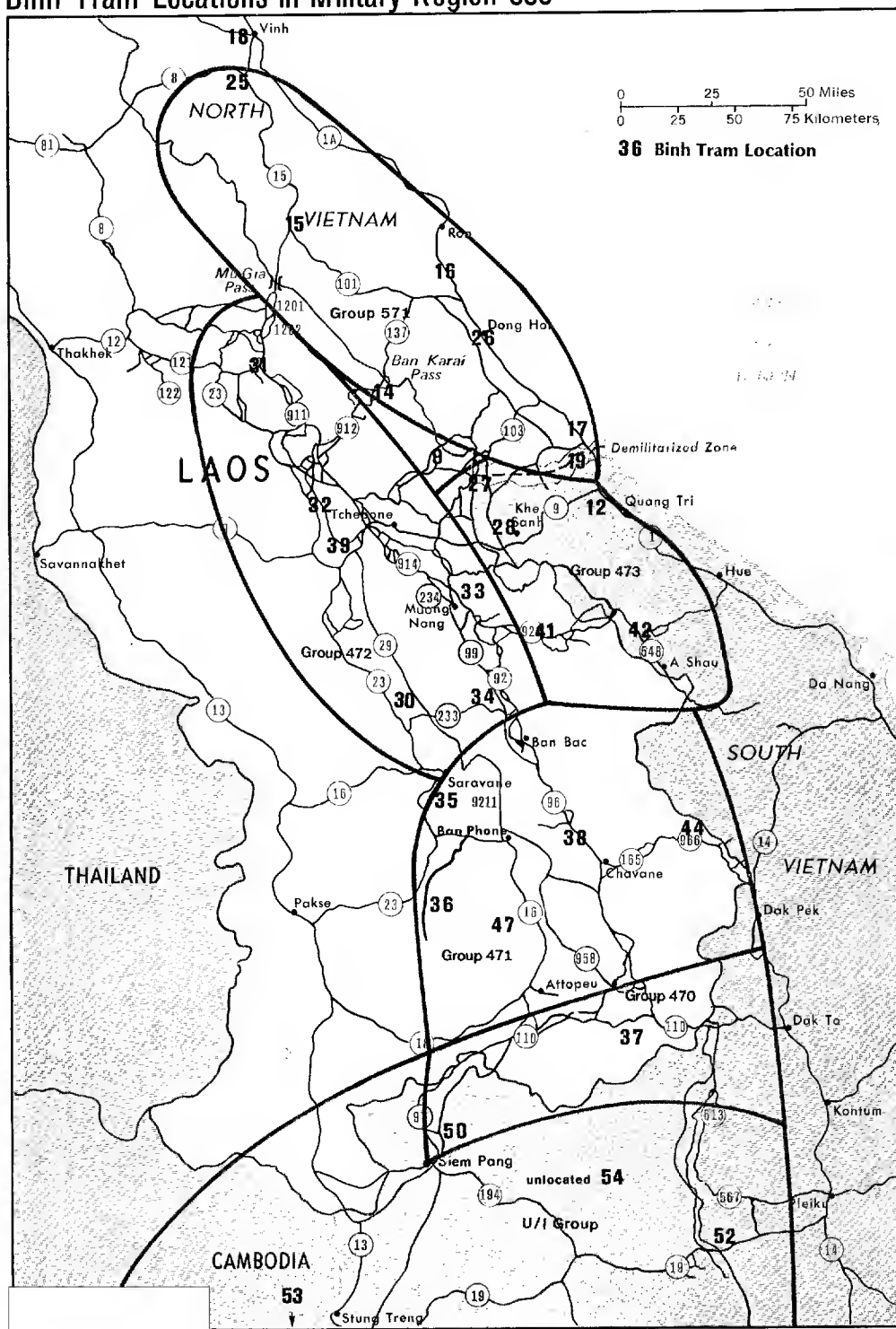
9. The sustained high level of vehicle activity through the Ban Karai Pass which has been detected by sensors in recent weeks has recently been corroborated in intercepted North Vietnamese communications. Binh Tram 14, the major Communist logistic element at Ban Karai, was apparently engaged in a special transportation campaign from 1 to 22 February, the period immediately preceding the cease-fire in Laos. Apparently, some civilian vehicle companies were pressed into service during this transportation campaign. It also appears that Binh Tram 14's effort is being supplemented by the addition of three transportation battalions which were operating around Vinh in January.

10. During the campaign at least 4,000 tons of supplies were moved, in almost 1,100 vehicle trips, by Binh Tram 14. During Phase I, from 1 to 14 February, the emphasis was on the movement of foodstuffs, which comprised almost all of the 2,540 tons delivered. From 14 to 22 February the emphasis turned to deliveries of ordnance. Of the at least 1,500 tons delivered during the period, 1,140 tons was ordnance, the remainder comprising food, explosives, petroleum, communications equipment, and tank accessories. Recent photography has also confirmed vehicle activity just north of Ban Karai, where 16 vehicles were observed [REDACTED]

25X1

11. It is not clear from the intercept if this activity was reporting on supplies being received by Binh Tram 14 or being sent south. However, several other recently received reports have referenced deliveries from Binh Tram 14 to a major storage area on Route 911 northwest of Tchepone, and we estimate that the referenced deliveries were headed there from North Vietnam. If so, the two-phase effort seems logical because it left the more critical ordnance and military equipment outside the US bombing zone in Laos until just before the cease-fire. It should be noted that this transportation campaign coincided precisely with one designed to move very large quantities of supplies into northern Laos. In so doing, the North Vietnamese significantly increased their stores of supplies inside that country as of cease-fire day.

Binh Tram Locations in Military Region 559



25X1

12. Reports from Binh Tram 14 following the cease-fire revealed that between 22 and 24 February at least 380 tons of supplies were dispatched to the Route 911 storage compound. Similarly, [redacted]

25X1

[redacted] heavy truck traffic south of Ban Karai Pass. [redacted]

25X1

25X1

on 25 February, 185 movements (106 southbound) were detected on the Ban Karai roads. [redacted] steady, although not large, flow

25X1

of traffic on the roads leading south from the Mu Gia Pass. Finally, near the western end of the DMZ, [redacted]

25X1

25X1

[redacted] significant southbound vehicle movements. Routes 1033 and 90 (parallel to the border between Routes 9 and 926) were particularly active. During the period 19-25 February, 81 detections of southbound movements were reflected on Route 1033 and 92 detections on Route 90.

The heavy activity on Route 1033 was corroborated by [redacted] photography which showed 20 trucks scattered along the route.

25X1

13. Between 22 and 24 February, numerous reports indicated very heavy vehicle movements and cargo deliveries from north of Tchepone as far south as Ban Bac. On 24 February, for example, an element in the central Panhandle reported receiving 43 vehicles of supplies - almost all ammunition. Some of the vehicle activity continued to be in apparent support of Communist tactical activity in southern Laos: on 22 February a Forward Air Controller noted a large truck convoy, accompanied by two tanks, parked waiting to move out on Route 1605 northeast of Paksong.

14. After the cease-fire in Laos, vehicle movement there became much easier. This was reflected by Binh Tram 34 when it informed Group 472 that "the enemy did not strike, so movement is good." The North Vietnamese also have apparently abandoned their usual cautious mode of operating only at night. On 25 February, 80% of all [redacted] activity occurred during daylight hours.

25X1

15. Enemy communications reveal that the North Vietnamese logistic apparatus in the central Panhandle is attaching special significance to the period 23 February - 5 March. Three intercepts on 23 February laid out detailed instructions on what routes are to be used during this period. Apparently, vehicles carrying supplies south from Group 571 in North Vietnam (probably via the Ban Karai Pass and Binh Trams 14 and 32) will follow Routes 911 and 914 to Route 99. At Route 233, vehicles can stop to pick up gasoline, then proceed south on Route 99 into the Group 471 area. The petroleum pipeline in southern Laos extends to Route 233 near its junction with Route 99, making this a logical stop for petroleum pickups. Vehicles making the return trip will travel via the central corridor (Routes 29/9211/958): they too will stop at Route 233 for fuel then proceed north to Route 917, into the Binh Tram 32 area. Shipments of artillery and tanks are also contemplated from Group 571, and these

will travel down Routes 916 and 917 to Route 99, then south to Group 471 in the southern Laotian Panhandle, also traveling day and night. All of the routes mentioned have been maintained in good shape throughout this dry season.

16. The establishment of these travel routes represents the fullest expression of a new mode of operation adopted by the North Vietnamese this dry season. A number of transportation battalions, subordinate to Military Region 559 directly rather than through a Binh Tram, appear to be operating through the length of the Panhandle, picking up supplies in the north and highballing them to the southern reaches of Laos or in some cases to South Vietnam or Cambodia. Logistic personnel are being exhorted to sustain better than average performances: vehicle drivers are expected to travel more than 60 miles each day, roughly double the distance covered in past periods when shuttling (and bombing) predominated. The separation of northbound from southbound movement on different routes is presumably aimed at minimizing congestion on the roads. Binh Tram 34 is playing a key role in this campaign. On 23 February it was revealed that the Binh Tram would be entrusted by Group 472 with "the task of transporting cargo to the battle front." Two days later the Binh Tram assured Group 472 that vehicles would be able to travel "in two directions."

17. Signs that the Route 99 corridor is undergoing repairs and preparations for post-cease-fire activity continue to be noted. In the past two weeks, we have reported that the Route 911/914/99 corridor would be the primary route for vehicle activity after the Laos cease-fire, and subsequently that vehicle command stations were being established along Route 99 for the supervision of vehicle activity. Now there is further evidence that the area along both Routes 99 and 29 is being cleaned up and repairs being made so that the "International Delegation" can go there - roads were to be in good repair so that traveling conditions for small vehicles would be guaranteed. The "policing up" of the area includes gathering of empty gasoline barrels and other articles scattered around the area. Simultaneously, however, the North Vietnamese have expended considerable effort on camouflaging activity along both Routes 29 and 99. The meaning of these developments is not clear. It appears that at least until 5 March a crash transportation effort will be under way. Thereafter, the preparations for supervision along one and possibly two major supply corridors cloud the picture of what may happen.

18. Recently the Communists have also sustained a high level of logistic activity in the tri-border/northeast Cambodia area. A report of 22 February, for example, indicated that vehicles were moving in both directions between Binh Trams 37 and 50, probably carrying foodstuffs to Binh Tram 37 and ordnance and military supplies south to Binh Tram 50, near Siem Pang, Cambodia. Another intercept on the same day

[redacted]

revealed rice deliveries into northeastern Cambodia. Some of the rice was to be delivered into southern Laos, as far north as Route 233 in the Binh Tram 34 area. The intercept noted that the unit was "determined to send out" 46 vehicles, capable of handling over 175 tons of cargo. On the 25th, Group 470 reported that more than 100 vehicles had delivered cargo -- probably foodstuffs -- from northern Cambodia to Binh Tram 37 in the tri-border area. Another 100 vehicles were delivering cargo in the opposite direction; some of the southbound deliveries comprise fuel, but the remainder is estimated to be military supplies.

19. Information on VC/NVA activities farther south in Cambodia is fragmentary but does indicate that the Communists have been extensively using several cross-border routes to move supplies, troops, and civilians from Cambodia into northern Tay Ninh Province in South Vietnam, presumably for the purpose of establishing and securing a legal base of operations inside South Vietnam.

20. One of the roads reportedly being used -- Route Q-22 -- has subsequently been designated as a legal VC/NVA point of entry. On 15 February, some five days prior to the date Route 22 was so designated, [redacted] several Communist troop and tank concentrations. A total of eight tanks (six PT-76s and two T-54s) and an unknown number of soldiers reportedly were protecting supply shipments moving into South Vietnam from Cambodian storage depots near Krek and Chup. [redacted] another heavily used cross-border entry corridor is Route 246 leading from Mimot south through the town of Katum in northern Tay Ninh Province -- about 10 miles due east of the Route 22 entry. Hondas, carrying rice, and convoys of up to 70 trucks, carrying troops and civilians to be resettled, have reportedly been regularly moving south into the Katum area from Cambodia since the cease-fire order was given on 28 January.

25X1

25X1

Logistic Developments in Northern Laos

21. Significant logistical developments were detected in northern Laos during the past week. Since the announcement of a North Vietnamese transportation offensive to move supplies to NVA units there, large quantities have been detected en route to all of the major Communist strongholds in the region. The largest quantities have been detected moving on Route 7 toward the Plaine des Jarres and on Route 65 toward Samneua. Significantly, since 1 February, Binh Tram 24, the NVA logistic entity operating along the Nam Ou River in Luang Prabang Province, has been appearing with increasing regularity in intercepted communications, and it too appears to be receiving an increasingly substantial flow of supplies. It is evident that greater emphasis is being placed on the movement of cargo into the area around Luang Prabang than was previously the case. Since

1 February, Binh Tram 24 has received 270 tons of cargo, consisting almost entirely of foodstuffs and ammunition, a large part of the latter being large-caliber mortar and rocket ammunition.

22. In the Plaine des Jarres area, information on logistical activity has been sporadic but has reflected significant vehicle activity in conjunction with the transportation offensive. The major routes leading to and around the Plaine are in generally good condition and sustaining significant vehicle activity. Repairs to bomb-damaged roads were made quickly to expedite the apparently heavy movement of supplies, and COMINT has revealed that on 21 February ammunition was being delivered to enemy forces at certain key points around the southwestern rim of the Plaine. Information from the southern Plaine area also recently revealed Communist intentions to maintain Routes 5 and 54 during the forthcoming rainy season.

Logistic Developments in South Vietnam

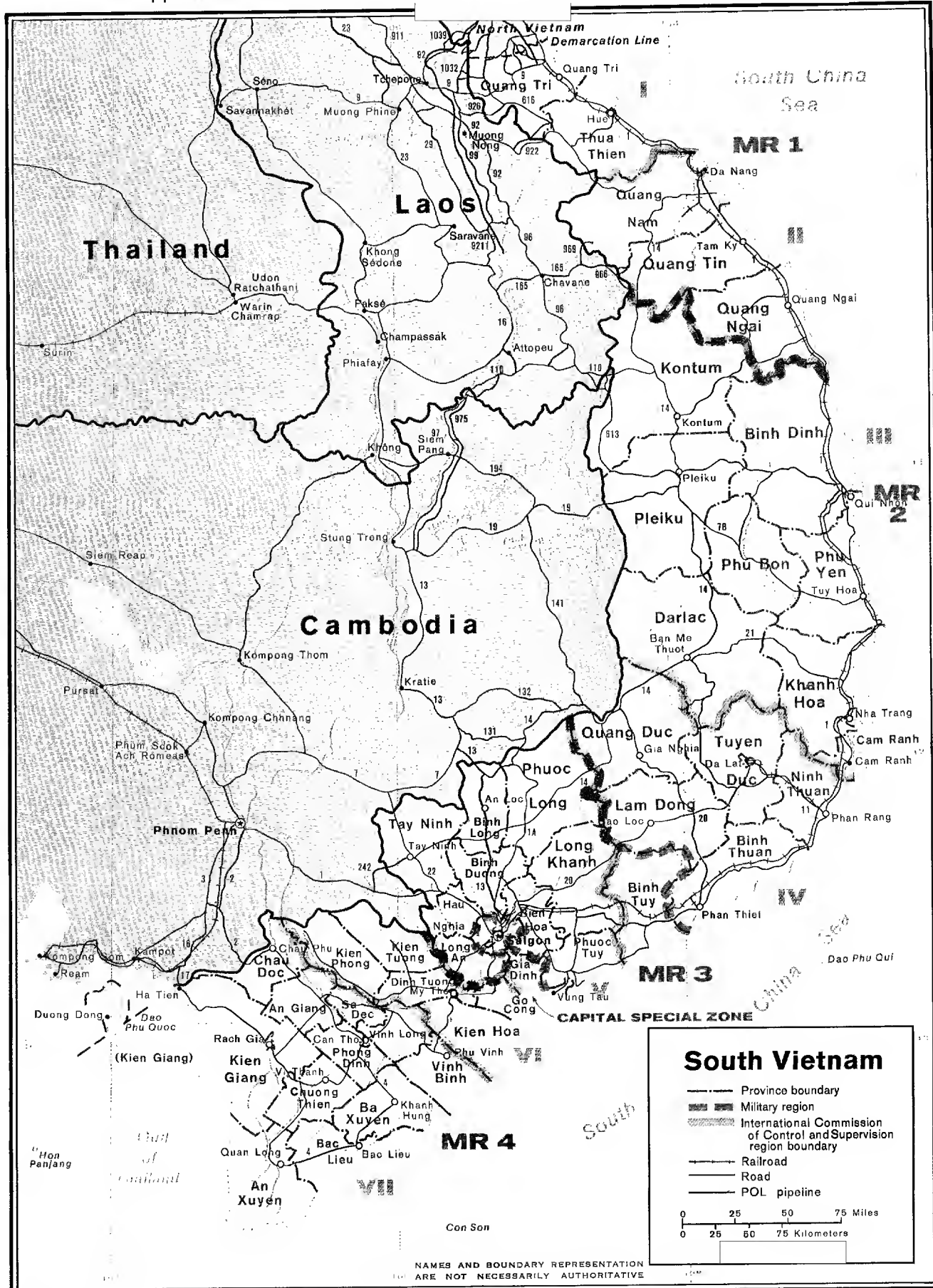
23. Recent intelligence from South Vietnam indicates that the Communists are continuing significant levels of resupply activity, including preparations for a major supply push into the Delta. [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] the Communists plan to transfer all "war materials" currently stockpiled along the southern Cambodian border into the Delta provinces of South Vietnam during February and March 1973. Reportedly, Viet Cong village units within Dinh Tuong Province have been ordered to construct storage facilities, each capable of holding up to 150 tons of the expected supplies. No indication of the total quantity to be moved was given.

24. The Communists are sustaining high levels of transport activity in northern MR 1. [REDACTED] photographic coverage revealed heavy truck traffic on Route 9 west of Quang Tri City and on Routes 608 and 616 in western Quang Tri Province. Other reports indicate that supplies continued to pour into the A Shau Valley during the first half of February, although at a considerably slower pace than in 1972. Although COMINT shows heavy activity on the north-to-south routes through Laos, it does not reflect what part of this is being shunted toward A Shau. In addition to the newly infiltrated goods, 24 tanks recently used in fighting southwest of the Hue are now reportedly stored in the A Shau Valley. In southern MR 1, [REDACTED] the 711th NVA Division in the coastal lowlands is continuing to receive supplies from the western part of the province. Meanwhile, some evidence of Communist preparations to comply with certain cease-fire stipulations has been noted. Viet Cong units in Binh Dinh Province were recently ordered to inventory all weapons and ammunition in their possession as of 28 January. Damaged weapons were to be collected to be exchanged for new equipment in accordance with the terms of the cease-fire agreement. Farther south in

25X1



MR 2, more than 100 tons of rice were recently reported as available for distribution among Viet Cong troops and sympathizers who relocate into Communist controlled areas.

Recent Communist Manpower Developments in Indochina

Personnel Infiltration

25. Recently available COMINT indicates that North Vietnam continued to insert infiltrators into the pipeline in the period immediately prior to and following the 27 January cease-fire in South Vietnam. During the past week, 16 new regular infiltration groups, most of which are earmarked for the COSVN area, were detected in intercepted messages, primarily from the Binh Tram 14 area of Laos. Although it is difficult to determine precisely when the groups entered the pipeline, the date and reported location strongly suggest that a significant portion of the groups departed after the cease-fire became effective.

26. With the new detections, plus resulting gapfills, more than 14,000 infiltrators have been added to this dry season's infiltration estimate which now stands at 78,000. These new additions include infiltrators who started south both before and after the cease-fire (23,000 of the total have started south since 1 January). As a result of these new additions, Hanoi's detected infiltration commitment thus far during the 1972/73 dry season approximates that of the comparable period a year ago -- 81,000, as is shown in the following tabulation:

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Number of Starts 1 Sep 72 - 26 Feb 73</i>	<i>Number of Starts 1 Sep 71 - 26 Feb 72</i>
Total	78,000	81,000
MR Tri-Thien-Hue	20,000	11,000
MR 5	9,000	15,500
B-3 Front	12,500	19,500
COSVN	25,500	28,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	7,000

27. Of the 14,000 newly detected infiltrators, approximately 11,000 are destined for the COSVN area, raising the total sent to southern South Vietnam to nearly the 1971/72 level. Moreover, should the recent rate of detections of regular groups to COSVN continue, the level of infiltration to that area could surpass that of the entire 1971/72 dry season (38,000). It appears then that Hanoi has decided to rebuild its under-strength main force structure in southern South Vietnam. The strengthening of these units,

which suffered heavy losses during the 1972 offensive, will substantially increase enemy combat capabilities there.

28. In addition to the new regular infiltration groups, a number of new special-purpose groups have been observed in the pipeline in southern Laos this week, suggesting that Hanoi intends to bolster still further the number of military and civilian specialists in South Vietnam.

VC/NVA Redeployments in South Vietnam

29. The first known deployment of a North Vietnamese unit into South Vietnam since the cease-fire occurred in mid-February, when a North Vietnamese radar company moved from southern Laos into the Khe Sanh area. The move, clearly designed to provide direct radar acquisition support to the North Vietnamese SAM and antiaircraft units now operating in the area of the Khe Sanh airfield, is the first North Vietnamese radar unit ever identified operating in South Vietnam.

30. Other recently detected North Vietnamese redeployments of air defense units into South Vietnam -- including one SAM regiment (263rd) and three antiaircraft regiments (213th, 216th, and 223rd) -- occurred during the three weeks before the cease-fire. During that period, three antiaircraft regiments (218th, 234th, and 245th) also were observed COMINT moving into southern Laos.

25X1

31. Associated with the buildup of air defense units in western Quang Tri Province is the in-country relocation of the 280th Antiaircraft Regiment from north of Quang Tri City to the Khe Sanh area. On 20 February, intercepted communications revealed that the regular battalions of the 280th had been assigned to the 263rd SAM Regiment the previous day and that their subordinate companies should be ready to move. Units historically have moved within 12 hours of the receipt of division orders. That fact, plus some additional fragmentary evidence, indicates that the 280th Regiment has now relocated to the east of Khe Sanh. Khe Sanh is now virtually ringed with air defense units.

32. In southern South Vietnam, another COSVN element has returned to South Vietnam. COMINT of 17 February indicated that since 18 January an unidentified political entity subordinate to COSVN had moved from Cambodia into central Binh Duong Province, South Vietnam. This marks the first time that the entity has been in South Vietnam since April 1970. Several elements of COSVN, plus the entire South Vietnam Liberation Army Headquarters, have returned to South Vietnam in recent weeks. Although major elements of COSVN are still believed to be in Cambodia, they may be in the process of deploying to South Vietnam. In the key northern

SOUTH VIETNAM ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS

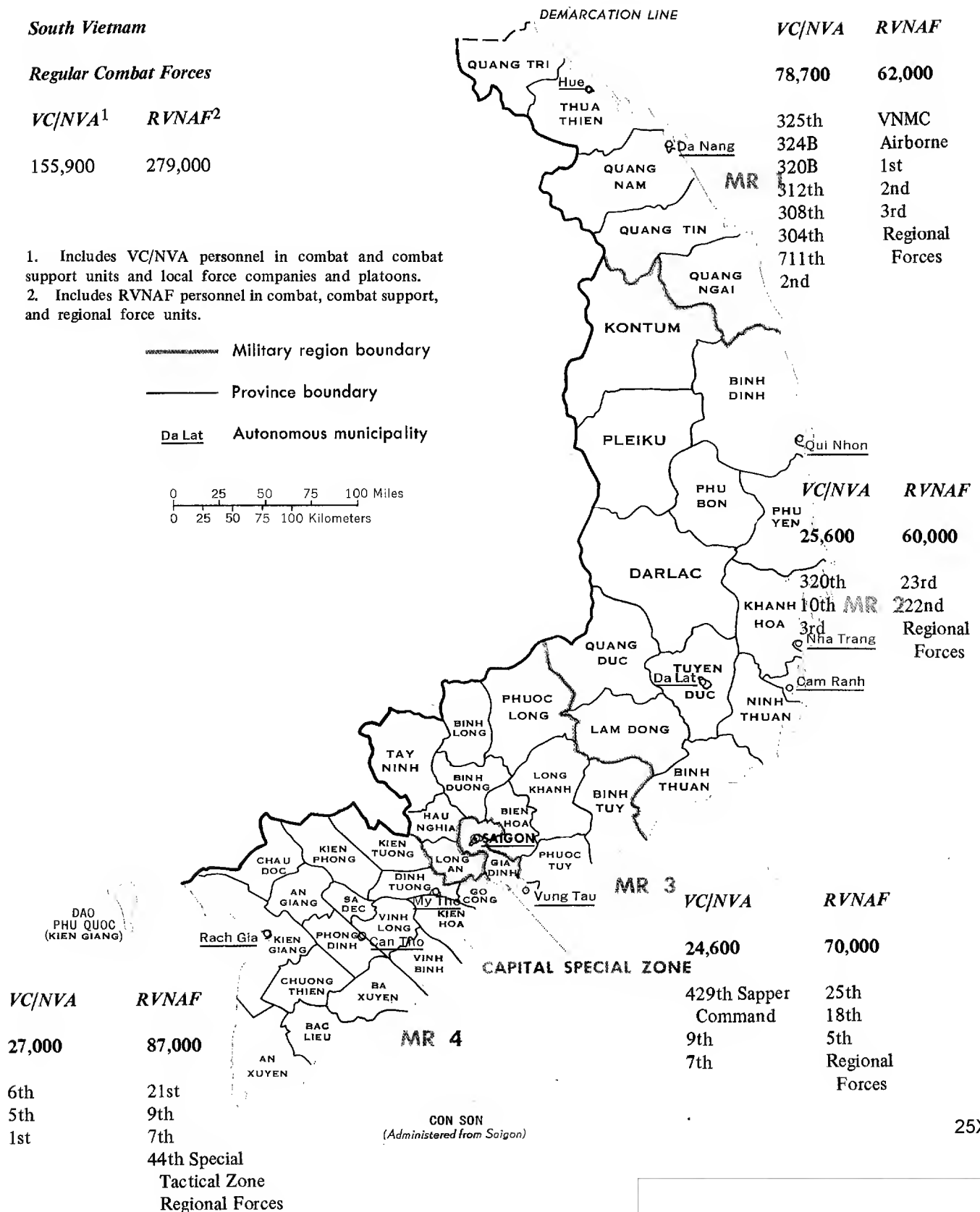
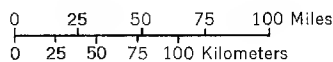
South Vietnam

Regular Combat Forces

VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²
155,900	279,000

1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in combat and combat support units and local force companies and platoons.
2. Includes RVNAF personnel in combat, combat support, and regional force units.

----- Military region boundary
----- Province boundary
Da Lat Autonomous municipality



Delta area, [] elements of the 207th Regiment (6th NVA Division) and the 174th Regiment (5th NVA Division) relocated into northern Kien Phong Province from adjacent areas in Cambodia and MR 4 in the period immediately preceding and following the cease-fire. The deployments increased the Communist commitment there to at least two full regiments.

25X1

33. In northern Kien Phong Province, it is almost certain that sharp fighting will persist, as the territory surrounding "Sampan Alley" -- a vital Communist cross-border supply route -- remains contested. Amid clashes which reportedly have occasioned heavy casualties over the past week, both the NVA and ARVN appear to be stiffening their determination to lay claim to territory in the area before the arrival of inspection teams of the International Commission of Control and Supervision (ICCS). The Communists, for example, have expanded their operations in the area to provide greater security for their infiltration route against ARVN operations; meanwhile, ARVN's goal, in addition to countering Communist expansionist moves, is to interdict the corridor which serves Communist units farther south in Dinh Tuong Province.

Viet Cong Military Recruiting in South Vietnam

34. Recruiting of VC military replacements has resumed in at least one area of South Vietnam for the first time since the cease-fire. District and village committees in Phu Yen Province were instructed on 14 February to recruit 300 youths (males and females above the age of 12) by 25 February and to provide a maximum of three days of small arms training. The first reported inductions took place in Phu Yen during the week of 11 February: 15 youths reportedly received only one day's training -- reflecting the qualitative problems often found in VC units -- and were directly assigned to the VC 96th Local Force Battalion. Manpower shortages have been severe since the middle of 1972, and there is no reason to suspect that the Phu Yen recruiting situation differs markedly from that of other areas of South Vietnam.

Manpower Developments in Laos

35. In northern Laos during the past week, elements of the 335th NVA Regiment were observed deploying toward Xieng Khouangville from their staging areas east of the Plaine des Jarres. This movement could signal impending Communist "land grabs" near Xieng Khouangville because the 335th has been involved in every major confrontation in northern Laos this dry season.

36. In northern Borikhane Province, a new unit indentified as "Group 772" has appeared. There are, however, indications that Group 772 may have moved to Laos from North Vietnam several months ago. It appears to be of regimental size, as its subordinates are known to consist of at least two infantry battalions -- the 40th and 43rd. The appearance of Group 772 does not substantially augment the number of NVA combat forces, because the 43rd Battalion was previously known to have operated in northern Laos.

Manpower Developments in North Vietnam

37. Major elements of the NVA 308B Division appear to be moving south. Although the headquarters of the division continues to be located in southern Thanh Hoa Province, its subordinate 36th Regiment was tenuously located on 14 February in the Dong Hoi area of Quang Binh Province. As yet, we have no indication of the significance of this move or whether the unit will continue to move farther south. Two other regiments of the division deployed into Laos earlier this dry season, where they are currently operating -- the 88th to northern Laos in December and the 102nd to southern Laos in January.

38. Induction-related messages intercepted during January confirmed previously reported press indications that the December-January phase ended last month. From the volume of personal messages related to induction, it appears that the peak induction rate was in December and early January. The number of personal induction messages for the December-January phase -- although a very imprecise indicator -- suggests that the number of inductees was of the same order of magnitude as during the same period in 1971-72.

25X1

Secret



Secret